



the model
un
experience

MODEL UNITED NATIONS

20 **top 10 reasons**
TO GET INVOLVED

how to 18
PARTICIPATE

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CHECK OUT
THESE ALUMNI!



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About This Issue



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"You are here to step into the shoes of UN ambassadors — to draft resolutions, to plot strategy, to negotiate with your allies as well as your adversaries. Your goal may be to resolve a conflict, to cope with a natural disaster or to bring nations together on an issue like climate change. You may be playing a role, but you are also preparing for life. You are acting as global citizens."

— United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon to the 2008 *Global Classrooms*® Model United Nations International Conference

Model United Nations (Model UN) — a simulation where students role-play UN delegates — is more than just an after-school activity. It is an opportunity to change the world. By stepping into the shoes of UN delegates representing their countries' interests to the global community, Model UN participants build the knowledge, skills and relationships needed to build a better global future.

Model UN is a transformative experience that deepens participants' understanding of the world and their place within it. Delegates emerge from Model UN with open minds, fresh ideas and new friends. With the skills they develop in speaking, writing, negotiating and diplomacy, it is no surprise that many go on to become community and world leaders. This issue of *eJournal USA* explores how young people all over the world are becoming model global citizens through participation in Model UN.

model

— The Editors



GLOBAL GENERATION: THE **model** **un** EXPERIENCE

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ACTING FOR CHANGE

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They may be acting, but Model UN delegates are preparing to make a very real impact in the world.

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what is model un

(And Why
You Should
Care)

By Nili Sarit Yossinger



Student-powered: Model UN is a simulation of the United Nations that teaches participants leadership, diplomacy and communication skills.

Every year,
hundreds of
thousands
of **young
people** all
over the world
participate in Model
United Nations (Model UN)
conferences.



But what is it?

In Model UN, students act as delegates from various countries serving on UN committees. Participants research issues and formulate negotiating positions based on the real interests of the countries they represent. Depending on the committee they are assigned to, delegates might develop global environmental policies or advise the UN Security Council on economic sanctions.

There are approximately 400 Model UN conferences worldwide and students can participate as early as middle school or as late as graduate school. To prepare for a conference, students thoroughly research the topics assigned to their committee, as well as the geography, culture, politics and history of the country they are representing. They then develop positions on each issue, taking into consideration the particular needs and goals of their country.

I was just beginning college when I first heard about Model UN. One of my professors was taking a group of students to the 2004 National Model UN Conference in New York and asked me to join. He hoped to convince me the experience would not only benefit me academically but would alter my professional pursuits beyond college.

I thought, “Why not?”

I signed up and agreed to be an “ambassador” representing Benin. Though I had spent time outside of the United States, I had no experience with international politics and knew very little about the United Nations (UN).

After months of research, I arrived at the conference with no idea what to expect from my fellow diplomats. I entered the General Assembly room and looked around at the 300-plus professionally dressed students, and suddenly I felt nervous. Would I be able to represent Benin adequately? Would I be able to speak in front of all of these people?

Yet, when the president called the room to order, we were all transformed. It really felt like we had become ambassadors from every continent, ready to resolve international conflict.

As we talked about the impact of terrorism on human rights or the humanitarian concerns in war-torn countries, I recognized the greatest challenge to resolving conflict. It was not a lack of time, money or energy. It was the difficulty of learning to negotiate and compromise with people from every background, culture, religion and perspective. Model UN not only helps us to face that challenge, but to overcome it.

The bottom line is there is no better way to understand how the world works than to try walking in the shoes of other countries. From the moment you set foot in a Model UN conference, *you* are the diplomat and *you* must represent your country’s interests in the global community.

What do you get out of it?

My Model UN experience was transformative. By the end of the week, I knew I wanted to make a difference in the world. I pursued my classes with a new passion. I learned everything I could about international children’s issues, peace building, and the functions of different international organizations. I participated in two more Model UN conferences, representing Egypt and then Albania, before joining the staff of American Model United Nations International in Chicago. Now I have the pleasure of training the next generation of Model UN all-stars and international leaders.

Model UN is the perfect opportunity to get involved, get passionate, and understand the world around you. The skills you will gain in conflict resolution, public speaking, diplomacy and writing — and the friendships you will build — will last you a lifetime. No matter what path you choose in high school, college and beyond, Model UN can help you get there! ■

Nili Sarit Yossinger most recently worked with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees in Washington. She currently serves as president of the General Assembly on the Executive Committee of American Model United Nations International in Chicago, Illinois.

Jacob P. Jones



Work?

HOW DOES THE UNITED NATIONS

With 54 rotating members, the Economic and Social Council

ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL (ECOSOC)

addresses the world's economic, social and environmental challenges.

UN agencies regulate standards in areas as diverse as weather (the World Meteorological Organization) and telecommunications (the International

SPECIALIZED AGENCIES, RELATED PROGRAMS, FUNDS AND OTHER UN ENTITIES

Telecommunication Union), as well as the World Bank and other development and financial organizations.

SECURITY COUNCIL With five permanent members (the United States, China, Russia, the United Kingdom and France) and 10 rotating member countries, the Security Council is charged with maintaining international peace and security.

INTERNATIONAL COURT OF JUSTICE (ICJ)

The main judicial body of the UN, based in The Hague, Netherlands.

UN GENERAL ASSEMBLY (UNGA)

Comprising all 193 members of the United Nations, the UN General Assembly (UNGA) is the main deliberative, policymaking and representative body of the United Nations and is responsible for subsidiary bodies (such as the UN Human Rights Council), programs and funds (such as the UN Development Programme), research institutes and other entities.

SECRETARIAT Led by the UN secretary-general, the Secretariat has more than 44,000 staff members who carry out the day-to-day operations of the United Nations all over the world.



acting

FOR CHANGE

By Ryan Kaminski



On the shoulders of giants: Model UN Deputy Secretary-General Ryan Kaminski (left) looks on as UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon addresses Model UN delegates at the 2009 UNA-USA *Global Classrooms* Model UN Conference at UN Headquarters in New York.

A friend of mine who
was trying to
understand Model
UN once asked me:
“It’s basically **just
like acting,
right?**”



The simple answer is yes. In Model UN, young people act like high-level diplomats representing the United Nations' 193 member states.

But Model UN is so much more.

My Model UN Experience

Arriving at my first Model UN conference in secondary school, I was nervous. Actually, I was really nervous. But when the registration desk handed me my country's placard, something changed. Suddenly, I felt like I was in the driver's seat, and that I had just been instantly promoted to the rank of ambassador.

Over the course of the conference, I evolved from wary observer to highly engaged stakeholder. I learned to identify potential friends and allies, compromise with opponents, and craft passable draft resolutions in collaboration with fellow delegates. I made new friends and learned about schools, cities and countries very different from my own.

As my stage fright evaporated, I realized that I was a part of something much bigger than myself. My fellow Model UN delegates and I formed a community with a shared commitment to international cooperation, diplomacy, mutual respect and compromise.

Energized by many subsequent conferences, I continued my Model UN career in college. Rather than participating only as a delegate, I also helped organize and even run a few conferences.

When tasked with running a simulation of the UN Human Rights Council (UNHRC), I was able to explore the mechanics of the UN's premier human rights organ. Along with sheer excitement, the position also came with new responsibilities. In particular, I was required to mentor four other committee staff members, as well as research and write clear background briefs on each of the topics the committee would consider. It was hard work, but it paid off when I got to watch the committee spring to life during my school's annual Model UN conference.

Coming together: Hundreds of high school students from 23 countries around the world attend the opening ceremony of a UNA-USA *Global Classrooms* Model UN Conference at UN Headquarters in New York.



Model UN delegates are preparing to make a very **REAL impact** in the world.

Later, I had the chance to moderate a simulation of the entire UN General Assembly (UNGA) of almost 400 students at UN headquarters (the real one!) in New York. To succeed, I had to be organized, efficient and fair — ensuring that all delegations present, from Japan to Togo, were given an equal voice in the committee's deliberations.

While the task was admittedly challenging, it taught me how to carry out complex projects, work constructively with other conference staff, and meet critical deadlines. After all, Model UN delegates usually have only a day or two to tackle major global problems!

Making the Transition

Serving as a Model UN delegate and conference organizer provided a practical and exciting channel for me to learn more about international affairs. I researched and wrote about topics ranging from climate change and nuclear nonproliferation to women's rights and the spread of HIV/AIDS. Representing a diverse array of countries such as the Netherlands, Saudi Arabia, Republic of the Congo, Spain and the United States was invaluable in helping me understand how different countries and cultures approach these issues.

As a student, my coursework definitely benefited since many of my school assignments concerned topics I had already debated in-depth during Model UN conferences. Similarly, when applying for internships and jobs, interviewers have been impressed with the fact that I have participated in and facilitated simulated sessions of major international institutions such as the UNHRC and UNGA.

After graduating from university, Model UN even helped me to land my first job abroad. When I started working as a Fulbright English teacher in Hong Kong, I learned that my assigned school chose me because they valued my knowledge of Model UN,

and my experience engaging a wide diversity of people and cultural perspectives.

Since my year in Hong Kong, I have been fortunate to pursue many new international opportunities — including one role where I attended real-life UN committee sessions with a real UN ambassador. In each instance, the skills and confidence I gained through my Model UN experience have helped me to be successful.

Acting on the World Stage



William Shakespeare wrote, “All the world’s a stage, and all the men and women merely players.” While the young men and women of Model UN may be pretending, they are also learning to “act” effectively on the world stage. By increasing their knowledge of international affairs, expanding their worldview and developing vital leadership skills, Model UN delegates are preparing

to make a very real impact in the world.

Take it from me: Model UN can boost self-confidence, improve understanding of major international issues and, most importantly, develop capacity for leadership. If more young people participate in Model UN, the world will likely see not only more great leaders, but ultimately more happy endings. ■

Ryan Kaminski, 26, is currently the Leo Nevas Human Rights Fellow with the United Nations Association (UNA). Previously he worked as a research associate with the Council on Foreign Relations’ International Institutions and Global Governance program. He was awarded the Jal Pavry Award for research in international peace and understanding from the Columbia University School of International and Public Affairs in 2009 and the Leo Nevas Young Advocate for Human Rights Award in 2011. Kaminski was a Fulbright Fellow in Hong Kong from 2008 to 2009 and also worked with Papua New Guinea’s Mission to the UN from 2009 to 2011. He obtained his bachelor of arts degree from the University of Chicago and master’s degree in international affairs from Columbia University.

model un THRIVES IN argentina

By Anastasya Lloyd-Damnjanovic

From containing a global epidemic to mediating border disputes, hundreds of young Argentines are tackling thorny international problems as participants in the Buenos Aires Model UN. **And though their mediations may be pretend, the issues they debate are very real.**

In Model UN, secondary- and college-age students step into the shoes of UN delegates. Acting as diplomats from UN member countries, participants research issues and formulate negotiating positions based on the real interests of the countries they represent. Participants who represent the United States sometimes find their roles particularly challenging, as the United States is involved in nearly every issue that comes before the international body and is a member of the UN Security Council.

“It amazed me the number of responsibilities all over the world the [United States] has at the same time,” said 19-year-old Model UN delegate Lucas Fernández.

Fortunately, young delegates representing the United States in Argentina have a reliable resource to guide them: the diplomats at the U.S. Embassy in Buenos Aires.

Embassy Engagement

After several Argentine Model UN delegates reached out to learn more about U.S. foreign policy, the U.S. Embassy in Buenos Aires decided to develop a program to help Model UN delegates represent the United States. In 1997, the U.S. Embassy partnered with nongovernmental organization *Asociación Conciencia* (Spanish for “Awareness Association”) to connect with local Model UN groups.

Fifteen years later, the embassy’s Model UN program is still going strong. Each year, more than 350 students from 60 schools across Argentina visit the embassy or attend digital sessions to prepare for Model UN conferences. Students come from schools both near and far, public and private, with ages ranging from 14 to 20 years.



All-American treat: Fresh-baked chocolate chip cookies keep Model UN delegates energized at the U.S. Embassy in Argentina.



© Shutterstock

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Though *Asociación Conciencia* helps get the word out about the embassy's program, many groups learn of it from past participants. "I was surprised by the support we received [from the U.S. Embassy] and the willingness to help us find information," said 19-year-old program alumna Gimena Ayala.

A Day in the Life of a Diplomat

Most Model UN preparation sessions at the U.S. Embassy last a full day. Students are invited to the embassy's Information Resource Center (IRC), where they have access to thousands of publications and other materials on U.S. foreign policy — and to embassy staff and diplomats.

The IRC's Model UN liaison greets them upon arrival and IRC staff lead students in discussions of issues that their upcoming Model UN conferences will

address. Topics range from nuclear disarmament and financial crises to climate change and humanitarian aid. The goal is not to simply *tell* Model UN delegates how to represent U.S. foreign policy, but to teach them how to research, analyze and develop foreign policy on their own. Political and economic officers at the embassy sometimes brief students on real issues they are working on, and even the U.S. ambassador has been known to join in.

"The approach is to help them locate and evaluate information, distinguish opinion from policy through comparison of different information sources, identify appropriate official sources and analyze specific documents to find policy positions," IRC Coordinator Graciela Spedaliere explains.

But the program isn't *all* work. Delegates also get a taste of daily life at the embassy, chatting with staff over lunch in the

embassy cafeteria and socializing with their fellow Model UN participants.

"I had the pleasure of meeting lots of people trying to improve their knowledge," said participant Florencia Antonella Mastroianni. "We all had one point in common: trying to help and find solutions for major global problems."

And of course, no visit to a U.S. Embassy would be complete without a truly American treat. Chocolate chip cookies prepared by the embassy chef are on hand all day to fortify the delegates during their action-packed agenda.

Role-Playing Leads to Real Understanding

Delegates leave the embassy better prepared for their roles as U.S. delegates in Model UN conferences, but the program's

Left to right: U.S. Ambassador to Argentina Vilma Martínez meets with local university students preparing for Model UN at the U.S. Embassy in Buenos Aires. | Participant Jonatán Carné | The U.S. Embassy building in Buenos Aires | A student attending the U.S. Embassy in Buenos Aires Model UN conference in 2011 | Argentine students gear up to represent the United States at a Model UN conference by visiting the Information Resource Center at the U.S. Embassy in Buenos Aires.



Photos: U.S. Embassy in Buenos Aires

impact extends beyond the conference room.

Adopting the perspectives of other countries not only leads Model UN participants to develop a more complex understanding of the world, but also of the United States' place within it.

"Before getting involved with the simulations, I thought of the United States as an alienated nation which only cared about its own profit," said 18-year-old Alejandro de Cousandier. "However, I realized my thoughts were not exactly correct. I've learned to see the world from a more complex point of view, where decisions are not to be taken easily, but have to be reached by consensus — to be argued over or even to be subject to voting."

According to Jonatán Carné, 20, the embassy program also exposes participants to the considerations behind U.S. foreign policy

decisions. "I can see, after the program, that decisions are made within a context, a national reality," he said, alluding to the domestic pressures that foreign policymakers often feel. "I have changed my point of view and it has helped me to understand lots of decisions and events from the United States' or other countries' perspectives without prejudging."

Agents of Change

For many participants, Model UN is not just an after-school activity, but the beginning of a lifetime devoted to diplomacy and international affairs. The experience of working together to solve global challenges opens their eyes to the power of the international community to help people.

For Mastroianni, the experience changed the way she sees the world and its problems. "Before participating in this program, my view of the world was very

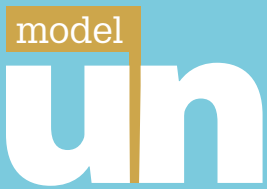
simplistic. I refused to understand some situations. But now I can analyze them through a different perspective."

As a result of her participation in the U.S. Embassy's Model UN program, the 19-year-old is now pursuing a bachelor's degree in government and international relations.

Carné, now studying international relations at the National University of Rosario, says Model UN directly contributed to his decision to pursue a career in international affairs. "I saw that the international system is a place to work on key problems that can change negative situations and consolidate agents of change," he said. "I want to make the world a place of understanding." ■

Anastasya Lloyd-Damnjanovic is an intern with the U.S. Department of State's Bureau of International Information Programs.

WHERE ARE THEY today?



Alumni in
International
Relations

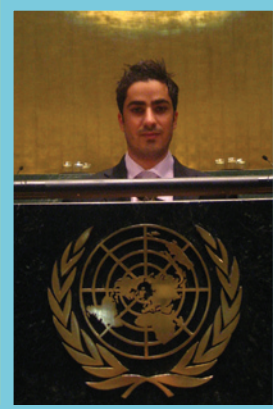
By Ashley Rainey Donahey



BETH
MILTON



ADRIAN
RODRIGUEZ-
MONTFORT



SOUSHIANT
ZANGANEHPOUR

Courtesy photos

Many Model UN participants choose to pursue **careers in international affairs**. Follow the stories of three people who have parlayed their passion for Model UN into professional success.

BETH MILTON: FROM ROLE-PLAY TO ROLE MODEL

Courtesy photo



American diplomat: Beth Milton is a U.S. Foreign Service officer currently serving at the U.S. Embassy in Tel Aviv.

When Beth Milton was first introduced to Model UN at age 13, her expectations were not high. She joined her middle school's Model UN club because her best friend said it might be fun. She never dreamed that her new after-school activity could change her life.

"Going into Model UN, I knew the big countries in the world," Milton said, "but I learned that there are so many more countries out there, each with their own perspectives and governments."

Milton continued doing Model UN throughout secondary school and into college. By the time she finished her university studies, the career path she would pursue was clear: She would work in international affairs.

Milton, 28, is now a U.S. Foreign Service officer working in the U.S. Embassy in Tel Aviv, Israel.

"Model UN directly led to my interest in foreign affairs," Milton said, "which led to me eventually joining the U.S. Foreign Service and becoming a diplomat."

Real World Skills

Fortunately the skills Milton developed in Model UN proved as useful in her professional life as they did in the conference room. Working together with delegates from around

the world made her a more effective negotiator, she says. Participating in Model UN gave her "a much more global perspective on things," she says. "It taught me how to collaborate in negotiations with people from different countries and different objectives."

Serving as a Model UN delegate also improved Milton's public-speaking ability, a useful skill in any profession.

"A large part of Model UN is you just need to get up there and talk," she explained. "That's something that I've carried with me throughout school and my career: being able to get in front of a bunch of people with no notes and start going."

Bonding Experience

Model UN not only impacted Milton's professional choices, but her social life too. As her interest in international affairs grew, so did her circle of friends. "We would hang out at Model UN Club, then at lunch and after school. It's a very good way to make friends," she said.

Traveling for multiple Model UN conferences in her home state of Virginia as well as one in Canada only deepened those friendships. In fact, she remains in touch with those friends despite the distance imposed by her diplomatic position.

"We really bonded," she said. "I made really, really good friends. [Model UN] became my social circle."

A Tool for Peace

Milton hopes more young people will get involved with Model UN. For her, Model UN is much more than a great way to make friends. In the U.S. Embassy in Tel Aviv where she works, Milton sees Model UN as a tool for peace.

"We use it in Israel," she explains. "We'll have Palestinian kids pretend they are Israeli and the Israeli kids pretend they are Palestinian, and suddenly they understand the other side's points and arguments."

"If you can understand — even if you don't accept — what another country's policies are, you can understand where they are coming from."

ADRIAN RODRIGUEZ-MONTFORT: PASSIONATE ABOUT POLITICS



Courtesy photo

Acting the part: U.K. diplomat Adrian Rodriguez-Montfort says Model UN helped him learn how to “act” effectively on the world stage.

For Adrian Rodriguez-Montfort, participating in his first Model United Nations (Model UN) conference was a case of love at first speech. As he entered the conference hall of Harvard’s Model UN conference in Cambridge for the first time in 2001, the initial call for speakers rang out. Rodriguez-Montfort raised his country’s

placard — El Salvador — signaling his intention to give a speech.

“I just thought I’d be 10, 20, 30 odd [names] down on the list,” he said. “And I was the first one called, so you can imagine my shock.”

He furiously studied his notes and reviewed the rules of procedure before moving to the dais to address hundreds of fellow delegates. He managed to deliver a short speech representing El Salvador’s position on nuclear non-proliferation and returned to his seat without a hitch. But it was what happened afterward that he said got him hooked.

“A flurry of messages from representatives from all over the world came in, saying: ‘Yes, let’s get together. Let’s start planning. I’ve got some ideas.’ And I was just absolutely taken by the speed of it — the actual feel of the negotiation and cooperation,” he said. “No matter how small the country that you’re representing may be, you can still have a major

role. You can actually influence a much larger debate.”

Although he was already in college at the time, Rodriguez-Montfort pursued Model UN with a passion. “I just fell absolutely in love with it,” he said. “From there it was just a rampage of conference after conference trying to make the most of it out of the short time.”

Making the Most of Model UN

Although his days as a Model UN delegate have long since passed, Rodriguez-Montfort, 28, stays connected with the program. During his senior year in college, he staffed numerous conferences, collaborating alongside the U.S. United Nations Association’s *Global Classrooms* Program in Houston, Los Angeles and New York, and even served as a committee director, deputy secretary-general and secretary-general for United Nations simulations.

model UN HALL OF FAME

Many Model UN participants have become **leaders** in **diplomacy, politics, law and media**. See if you recognize any of these high-flying former Model UN delegates!

Ban Ki-moon

UN secretary-general



© AP Images

Now Rodriguez-Montfort gets his international co-operation and negotiation fix through his position as senior policy adviser for climate change and energy policy for the United Kingdom's Foreign Office at the British Embassy in Mexico City. He landed his position, he said, in large part thanks to his Model UN experience and connections.

"You meet people in the conferences, who then go on to do internships, who then recommend you for internships, and that internship gives you a position, and that position takes you somewhere else," he explained. "The Model UN circuit becomes sort of a close-knit family."

Model UN offers more than just an extensive social network, however. Rodriguez-Montfort credits his finely honed negotiation and public-speaking skills to the many hours he spent practicing in conferences. While these skills can be taught in a classroom, they are best developed by doing.

"Conference after conference, you have the chance to test [your skills] in a safe, controlled environment," he said. "Years after that, when you're actually in the international arena and you're actually in negotiations, it feels very much natural. You've done it a hundred times before in Model UN."

Acting on the international stage feels so natural, in fact, that Rodriguez-Montfort says his first reaction when entering real international summits and conferences is: "Oh, it feels like Model UN all over again."

Lasting Impressions

Although Rodriguez-Montfort believes that Model UN is a natural step for anyone interested in international affairs, he is quick to point out that students of any background or interest can benefit. "You don't have to be somebody that wants to pursue a career in international affairs, politics or policy. It's a learning experience that gives you a lot of tools and experiences that will be beneficial to you no matter what career you choose in the future."

Another lesson Model UN teaches is humility. "You can't think you're the end-all, be-all when you're in Model UN. You realize you're just a small part of a bigger system that makes you feel that you're a part of something much bigger than yourself," he said. "It will really shape how you view yourself and how you view yourself in the world."

Grateful for all that Model UN has helped him accomplish, Rodriguez-Montfort hopes that more young people can be as fortunate as he has. "I cannot conceive of myself reaching this relatively senior position by my age if I had not taken on that challenge. It has shaped me in more ways than one, and I would really wish that other people will have the chance to have that same experience."

His advice to any young people considering participating in Model UN: "Just do it! The experience is fantastic!"

Justice Stephen Breyer
U.S. Supreme Court



© AP Images

"When I was an undergraduate at Stanford, I was twice a delegate to the Model United Nations and once a member of the Secretariat (when Stanford was the host). Students are enthusiastic role-players. We had to learn how nations and their representatives could work with others. We learned about how the United Nations (and international relations) worked in practice. The experience was valuable; the conferences were educational; and it was great fun. I am delighted to learn more than half a century later the Model UN is still going strong. I should think that in today's great global conversation it offers ... students an even more valuable experience."





Courtesy photo

SOUSHIANT ZANGANEHPOUR: MAKING IT WORK

Soushiant Zanganehpour, 29, says participating in Model UN helped him figure out what he wanted to do when he grew up.

When deciding what you want to be when you grow up, knowing what you do *not* want to be can be as valuable as knowing what you want. In the case of Soushiant Zanganehpour, participating in Model United Nations (Model UN) helped him figure that out.

Zanganehpour, 29, is the head of strategy and operations at the University of Oxford's Skoll Centre for Social Entrepreneurship, an academic organization that encourages innovative social transformation. He has held numerous positions in the private and nonprofit sectors, working on such issues as disarmament, nonproliferation of nuclear technologies, and corporate social and environmental responsibility.

But as a university student, Zanganehpour — like many students — was not sure what sort of career he wanted to pursue. "For me [Model UN] was a phase of trial and error, and figuring out whether the area of diplomacy and public affairs is really for me or not," Zanganehpour said.

Through Model UN, Zanganehpour came to realize that the issues he was most passionate about could also be explored outside of government.

model UN HALL OF FAME

Judge Stephen M.
Schwebel

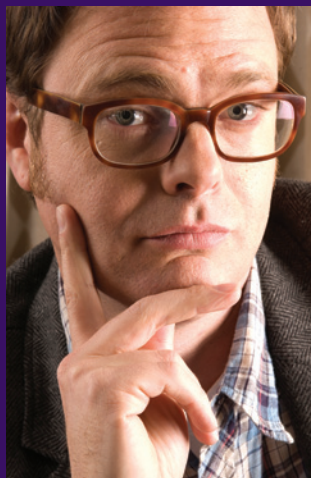
Former judge and president of
the International Court of Justice



© Daniel Bates / University of Cambridge / Squire Library Eminent Scholars Archive

Rainn Wilson

Actor and comedian, best
known for his role as
"Dwight" on the American
television series *The Office*



© AP Images

Ryan Seacrest

American television person-
ality, best known as host of
American Idol



© AP Images

Learning the Basics

At first, he found the experience to be a bit overwhelming. “It was like being thrown into the deep end, learning lingo and the decorum, and the limitations of the different fora and what they can and cannot do,” he said. But eventually he got the hang of it, made friends and even mentored other Model UN groups.

Zanganehpour, who grew up first in Iran and then Canada, also got to travel to the United States, Scotland and China as a participant in Model UN. He says it helped him understand the basics of international affairs. “Model UN provided a primer — first of all of understanding national interests and regional bloc interests — and the basics of countries and of international affairs.”

After he had learned about other countries’ languages, currencies, demographics, geographies, politics and histories, he found himself wanting to learn more. Through Model UN, Zanganehpour came to realize that the issues he was most passionate about could also be explored outside of government. “I would like to have a very different kind of impact,” he said. “I needed to do a deeper dive into the different issues.”

Finding a New Path

Despite the variety of professional positions he has held, however, Zanganehpour says he uses the skills he developed in Model UN “every day.” Above all, he values the communication experience he gained. Having to speak before hundreds of his peers at

Model UN conferences taught him how to prepare for public speaking, he said. In addition, learning how to get to the root of an issue and be able to articulate that issue to someone else — as delegates must do during negotiations — is a skill that Zanganehpour argues is valuable in any job.

Zanganehpour points out that there’s another, often-overlooked capacity that Model UN fosters: empathy. In his current job, Zanganehpour works with many different foundations and social entrepreneurs, and he says that without the ability to put himself in the shoes of others, he wouldn’t be able to do his job. It is through the development of so-called “people skills” — the ability to build and maintain relationships, manage competing interests and garner support for your ideas — that Model UN really translates into professional success, he said.

“Those are really, really important skills in life, and the simulation of Model UN will put you in a context where you have to find consensus amongst people that have very different interests.”

Zanganehpour encourages young people to give Model UN a try and see what it’s all about, but to not get discouraged if they find it’s not the kind of work they want to do. **“If you don’t find the impact you’re looking for in [Model UN], go and try entrepreneurial things. Go and try to make change happen.”** ■

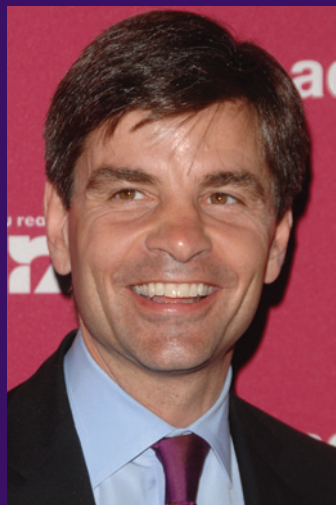
Kiyotaka Akasaka

Former UN under-secretary-general for communications and public information



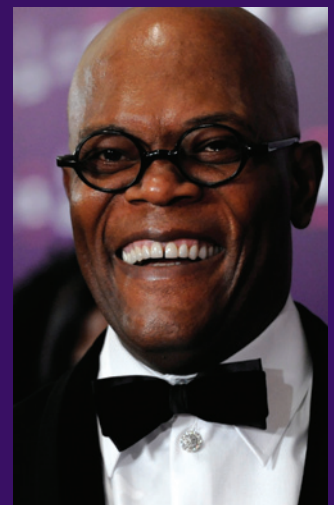
George Stephanopoulos

Television journalist and former adviser to President Bill Clinton



Samuel L. Jackson

Television and film actor, producer



HOW TO participate in model un

By Ana Ramic



After-school inspiration: Ana Ramic decided to start her own Model UN club after watching the film *Winning London*, starring Mary-Kate and Ashley Olsen.

© Warner Home Video (Courtesy Everett Collection)



Joan Hadert Photography

Originally from Bosnia, Ana Ramic, 26, lives in Chicago, where she is a program coordinator for the Chicago Council on Global Affairs.

She has previously worked for the British Consulate in Chicago, the U.S. Embassy in Athens, Greece, and the National Democratic Institute in Washington and Sarajevo, Bosnia.

The first time I heard of Model United Nations, I was 15 years old and watching a movie called *Winning London*.

The film was about a very driven girl named Chloe who was the leader of her secondary school's Model UN team. After performing particularly well in a local competition, Chloe and her team are selected to attend an international Model UN competition in London. Drama, adventure and hilarity ensue, and naturally the team returns home victorious.

After watching the movie, I was thrilled to learn that Model UN actually exists — and not just in Hollywood. I found out that there is a real organization where kids my age could hold real debates, on real issues, while representing real countries. Not only that, but with Model UN, you could travel to international conferences and meet kids from all over the world!

I immediately set to learning as much as I could about Model UN and how I could get involved. After calling all the schools in my area, I learned that there were no local Model UN clubs ... yet.

So, I started one on my own — and so can you.





Here's what you need to do to launch your own Model UN Club:

1. Get permission from your school to start a new club.

It's simple and easy. With just a little paperwork, you will be ready to go.

2. Find a teacher who will act as your adviser.

My social studies teacher agreed, but you can ask any teacher. If you are unsure where to start, ask your principal for suggestions.

3. Recruit members.

I created flyers about the new club and invited all those interested to attend an information session.

4. Decide when, where and how often to meet.

We decided to meet once a week, after school, in our social studies classroom.

5. Get to know your teammates.

Model UN requires teamwork. Getting to know each other better will make you a stronger team.

6. Contact other Model UN groups for advice.

Invite students or teachers with Model UN experience to talk to your team and share what they have learned.

7. Get familiar with the organization.

Check out the United Nations Association of the United States (UNA-USA) website for information on all things Model UN (<http://www.unausa.org/global-classrooms-model-un/how-to-participate/>). You will also need to study up on the real United Nations. Their website (www.un.org) is a great place to start.

8. Discuss which conferences to attend.

There are many factors to consider when deciding which conference to attend, including cost, travel distance, conference size and dates. Figure out what works best for your team.

9. Register your team.

Write to the secretary-general or contact person of your chosen Model UN conference to request registration forms.

10. Research your assigned country.

Once you have registered for a conference, you will be assigned a country to represent. Research your country's history, culture, political structure and positions on current issues. Use as many resources as you can find: Look for information at your school, local library and online.

11. Know your allies and your opposition.

You will need to collaborate with delegates from other countries to be as effective as possible at the conference. For each issue that will be debated, know which countries are most likely to agree with you and which are most likely to oppose you.

12. Review the rules.

Each conference publishes a set of rules and procedures that are derived from those used by the UN. These rules, sometimes called "parliamentary procedure," are designed to preserve majority rule, while still respecting the minority. Familiarize yourself with the rules before you go to the conference so that you can focus on the issues, not the process.

13. Make the most of it!

After all the hard work of preparing for a conference, just relax, do your best, and have fun!



10^{Top} REASONS

Ever wonder what it's like to be a diplomat? Thousands of students find out each year by participating in Model UN conferences. Here are the top 10 reasons you should join them:

make your mark

Ever wonder why some world problems just don't seem to get solved? Model UN gives you the chance to hone your problem-solving skills. Take a crack at making the world a better place!

8

take a walk in someone else's shoes

Learning to see multiple sides of an issue is an invaluable skill. In Model UN, you have to argue the positions and perspectives of another country. Open your mind to new possibilities!

9

learn how to deal

6

Obviously most of us at some time or another have to deal with people who don't agree with us. From settling international border disputes to clashes over commas, Model UN will teach you how to negotiate like a pro!

see new places

1

Every year more than 400 Model UN conferences take place all over the world. Whether you are looking to stay close to home or explore new territories, Model UN takes you places!

meet new people

2

With more than 400,000 students from some 52 countries participating each year, Model UN brings people together. In between delivering speeches and negotiating international treaties, you may just find yourself making new friends!

Watch the film *Model UN*
for Everyone! <http://goo.gl/3tXU6>



WAYS TO JOIN model UN

There is no better way to learn than by doing. And where else can you act as an ambassador representing your country on the international stage? Let your inner actor emerge!

learn by doing

10

have fun!

The main reason students keep coming back to Model UN year after year is ... it's fun! See for yourself what the excitement is all about: Join your local Model UN chapter or start your own!

63

stand up and be heard

If the thought of getting up in front of a large group to speak sends you into a panic, you need Model UN. Practice public speaking before an audience of supportive peers. Shake off your fears and shine!

think outside the box

How would you address the economic crisis, ensure food security or protect human rights? Model UN lets you air your ideas for making the world a better place. Be innovative!

4

flex your (writing) muscles

What do you want to be when you grow up? No matter what job you hope for, chances are you will need strong communication skills to be successful. Flex your persuasive muscles by writing position papers and speeches!



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